

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCCT-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 OPR-02 SY-04 AID-20

DRC-01 /109 W

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O P 130220Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE NIACT 7464

INFO AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE PRIORITY

UNCLAS BRIDGETOWN 1215

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT PINS ST

SUBJ: ST. LUCIA POLICE USE TEARGAS TO DISBURSE DEMONSTRATORS

REFS: BRIDGETOWN A-65; BRIDGETOWN 0806

1. OPPOSITION ST. LUCIA LABOR PARTY (SLP) STAGED MASS DEMONSTRATION IN CAPITAL OF CASTRIES AFTERNOON OF JULY 12, REPORTEDLY IN PROTEST OF ALLEGED FRAUD IN ST. LUCIA'S MAY 6 GENERAL ELECTION AND GOVERNMENT INACTION IN FACE OF RAPIDLY RISING COST OF LIVING. DEMONSTRATION, ANNOUNCED BY SLP LEADERS EVENING OF JULY 11, TOOK PLACE DESPITE GOVERNMENT BAN ON ALL DEMONSTRATIONS AND MARCHES WITHIN TEN MILES OF CASTRIES FOR PERIOD OF THREE MONTHS. BAN WAS PUBLISHED JULY 12 IN EXTRA-ORDINARY ISSUE OF OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT GAZETTE.

2. ACCORDING TO MEDIA REPORTERS AT SCENE, POLICE USED TEARGAS TO DISBURSE CROWD, VARIOUSLY ESTIMATED AT BETWEEN SEVERAL HUNDRED AND SEVERAL THOUSAND, AFTER DEMONSTRATORS, AT URGING OF SLP LEADERS, REFUSED TO DISBAND. BARBADOS-BASED UNCLASSIFIED

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RADIO NEWSMAN SAM TAITT, IN ST. LUCIA COVERING CURRENT CARICOM

TRADE MINISTERS' CONFERENCE, DESCRIBED USE OF TEARGAS AS UNPROVOKED AND INDESCRIMINATE. TWO DEMONSTRATION LEADERS, GEORGE ODLUM AND PETER JOSIE, REPORTEDLY DETAINED BY POLICE.

3. SEVERAL PERSONS OVERCOME BY GAS, BUT NO RPT NO SERIOUS INJURIES HAVE BEEN REPORTED. PRESENT SITUATION DESCRIBED AS QUIET BUT TENSE. THERE HAVE BEEN NO RPT NO REPORTED THREATS TO FOREIGNERS, AND EMBASSY DOES NOT RPT NOT ANTICIPATE ANY.

4. COMMENT: DEMONSTRATION APPARENTLY PLANNED IN ADVANCE AND TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH SCHEDULED CARICOM HEADS OF GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE, WHICH OFFICIALLY BEGINS JULY 15, IN ORDER TO GAIN ADDED PUBLICITY AND PRODUCE ADDED EMBARRASSMENT FOR GOVERNMENT OF PREMIER JOHN COMPTON. (PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE OF TRADE MINISTERS OPENED JULY 10 ON WHAT PRESS DESCRIBED AS EUPHORIC AND OPTIMISTIC NOTE.) DURING PAST TWO MONTHS SLP LEADERS HAVE CHARGED THAT MAY 6 ELECTIONS, IN WHICH SLP WAS NARROWLY DEFEATED BY INCUMBENT UNITED WORKERS' PARTY, WERE UNFAIRLY CONDUCTED. TWO UNSUCCESSFUL SLP CANDIDATES, ONE OF THEM GEORGE ODLUM, HAVE FILED SUITS CONTESTING ELECTION RESULTS.
WOOLLONS

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